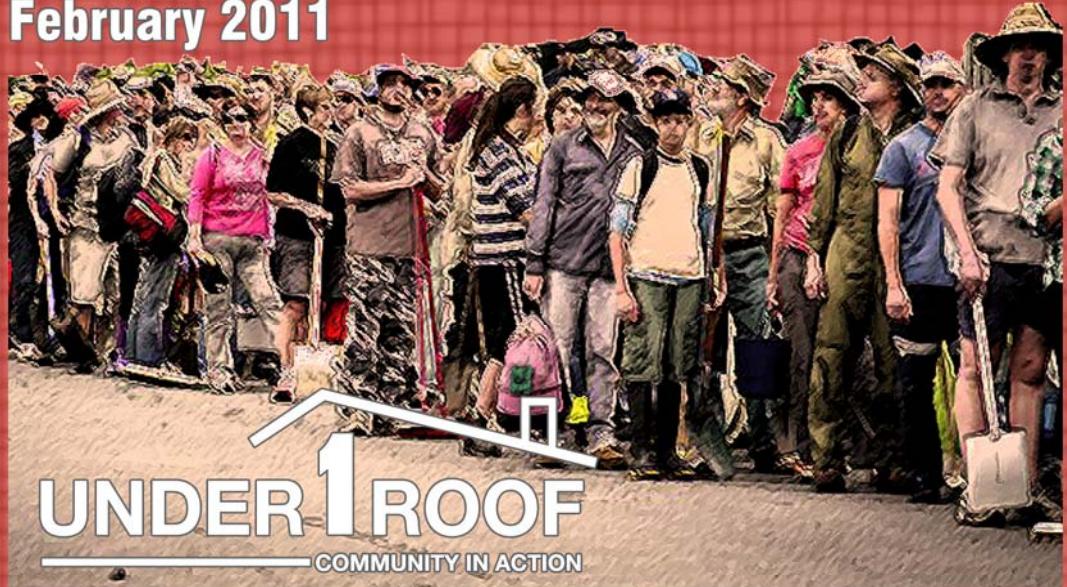# A Silver Lining

Community development, crisis and belonging

Exploring the role of community development
in Queensland's recovery from the
January 2011 floods.

February 2011

UNDER 1 ROOF
COMMUNITY IN ACTION

A Silver Lining: Community development, crisis and belonging.

© Under 1 Roof: Home at last…
February 2011

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Art work and design by Amy Trotman

Under 1 Roof includes:
□   139 Club Inc.
□   Brisbane Youth Service
□   CityCare.
□   Communify
□   Footprints
□   Mission Australia
□   New Farm Neighbourhood Centre
□   QuIHN
□   The Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley

U1R partners with Brisbane Housing Company and bric Housing and has emerging partnerships with SANDBAG and West End Community House.

For more information contact: Under 1 Roof on 0400 1964 92.

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Executive summary

Introduction

Under 1 Roof[1] (U1R) invited participation in an interactive forum to explore community development responses in recovery processes linked to the recent flood crisis in Queensland. This forum was attended by 63 community sector and government practitioners who explored:

- Strategies to build on the community spirit already demonstrated during the flood crisis.
- Strategies to help restore and strengthen the social fabric and create an even stronger foundation for future challenges and crises.
- Community building ideas to help people with residual trauma, fears for the future and grief for what has been lost?
- Strategies to strengthen the community's ongoing capacity to show leadership, plan and engage with government, business and other stakeholders about solutions to problems created by the floods.

This report also explores experiences from Australia and overseas in understanding how community development methods have been applied to crisis recovery. The recommendations synthesise ideas and resources from other jurisdictions with the forum material and address the following themes:

- Grass roots activities that bring people together and strengthen supportive relationships
- Strengthening community development capacity, resources and infrastructure
- Building leadership and governance capacity
- Participatory planning
- Addressing disadvantage and vulnerability.

Community development methods in response to recovery

The range of ideas from the literature review and raised during this event highlight a significant role for community development in contributing to networks, resilience, leadership capacity and governance arrangements that improve local recovery efforts.

The significant immediate needs of households, entire neighbourhoods, towns and businesses highlight the critical role of government in comprehensive planning, ensuring services are provided and resources are available. The role of government infrastructure together with specific roles for a substantial workforce drawn from Brisbane City Council and the military for example, resulted in immediate capacity which in turn contributes to hope and wellbeing among those most affected.

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[1] Under 1 Roof is a consortium of Brisbane inner city agencies focussed on improving integrated service delivery to homeless people and contributing to an overall reduction in homelessness in Queensland.

Significant capacity for harnessing and deploying residents willing to help, was also made possible through agencies such as Volunteering Queensland and the Red Cross. This capacity was augmented with many local efforts to link residents with other residents in localities, as well as help in meaningfully deploying large contingents of people arriving in affected communities to offer assistance. Local door knocking and triage efforts meant that in some communities, volunteers were well directed to where local need existed. The strength of local communities identifying local needs from a bottom up perspective reaching out to government and larger institutions with large-scale capacity to harness and provide resources is a good example of why top-down and bottom up processes need not be seen as binary opposites.

The forum heard that significant help and assistance was exchanged by residents outside of any formal volunteering process. People helped each other prepare and helped each other recover. The strength of nearby social networks is a definite factor in people's capacity to prepare and recover. In disaster scenarios overseas, there is acknowledgement that if the disaster situation is so difficult, social networks and relationships nearby are the only source of help until disaster recovery assistance can physically reach affected communities. This strengthens the case for locality based community development which proactively builds and strengthens these relationships which come into play in disaster preparedness and recovery. This fabric of local relationships also enhances belonging and ensures people have access to many possible resources and opportunities such as exchanges of child care, local action groups, and community gatherings based on common interests.

Community development roles and functions quickly emerged from agencies such as neighbourhood and community centres which have traditionally used community development methods and employed specialist staff in designated community development work roles. Local governments also invest in and provide significant community development capacity in Brisbane City as one example and these roles have been instrumental in work that has built community capacity before the crisis, ensured a good understanding of community issues and enabled many locality based responses to emerge quickly during the immediate aftermath of the floods. The ideas generated in this workshop and expressed in the literature also highlight that community development methods are deployed by many types of agencies, stakeholders and individuals. These methods can also be integrated with traditional service delivery to expand outreach and build the capacity of professional helpers to reach more people as just one example.

Many participants in the forum expressed that the extent of participation was so great that not every offer of help was able to be taken up. From a community development perspective, finding capacity to continue to engage people, exchange thanks and gratitude, and continue to offer help in the longer term aspects of recovery are all important. Supportive infrastructure including databases, coordination roles and social networking are all needed to enable putting local people in touch with local people so that locality based reciprocal relationships are strengthened as much as possible. Unaffected communities are also seeking ways of helping with ideas such as sister suburbs, buddy systems etc. being flagged as a way of building capacity between neighbourhoods to exchange help when it is needed.

The scope and creativity of ideas to bring people together in supportive relationships which provide opportunities for mutual helping, celebrations and memorials, seem

unlimited. Some basic resources can be helpful such as small, responsive grants programs, while offers of community space, facilitation help, advertising etc. are all potentially very useful. There was clear advice about the organic and creative nature of these responses. Community development can help, but overly orchestrating these types of activities wouldn't help. They need to flow from communities themselves and meet with responsive, respectful help that doesn't take over.

The fate of isolated and disadvantaged residents was raised consistently across the groups and is also highlighted in the literature about community development and recovery. Community development is fundamentally concerned with including everyone and uses particular methods to overcome barriers to the participation of groups with fewer resources and other structural barriers preventing access. Specific efforts are needed to ensure the wellbeing of disadvantaged residents including continued access to available material resources, help to be re-housed if possible and within the community of their choice so as to sustain longer term connections, and deliberate efforts to ensure that all community driven activities are inclusive and that barriers to participation are overcome. Overall, some communities are more relatively disadvantaged than others and careful assessment of the implications of relative disadvantage is needed. Specific strategies are needed to ensure that entire areas are not left behind in the recovery process.

Much of this type of capacity is underpinned by local governance, those structures that bring together all key stakeholders including residents, to plan for the future, identify issues, secure resources, allocate responsibilities and drive implementation. This capacity is usually at different stages of development in different communities. Existing structures can function this way (resident groups, community planning teams, local area advisory committees etc) or new structures can be created. In Brisbane recently, many communities quickly assembled leaders from all sectors to plan localised recovery efforts and ensure that engagement with government articulated local needs and coordinated resources, services and help to have the greatest positive impacts. Some communities are already extending the role of these groups to develop local recovery plans and the workshop highlighted that all community and regional planning should plan for how disaster recovery will be managed should the worst happen again.

Community development roles supporting these structures are very important and so are processes of legitimisation where these structures are endorsed by government (political and administrative arms) and the wider community. This process of legitimisation provides authority to these structures and supports them to raise their profile as a source of effective leadership in the community. As formalised governance arrangements, these groups then also have responsibilities and must define processes of accountability to all stakeholders. Active support for developing and sustaining governance arrangements in local communities by government is important. While crisis responses are commendable, long term, strong and effective governance groups that are already engaged in the implementation of various solutions to community issues is the best foundation for stronger recovery where bottom-up efforts and top-down support come together to achieve effective and sustainable results.

Queensland's recent flood crisis resulted in thousands of Queenslanders helping each other to prepare and in the recovery process. This report highlights those strategies that will best consolidate and strengthen relationships within and between communities, and charness the capacity created for continued effective engagement between communities

and government. A recovery effort that restores infrastructure and rebuilds homes, but also results in stronger, more resilient and caring communities will have long term implications for mental health, community capacity, productivity, resilience and hope.

Recommendations

Strengthen community development capacity and resources

1. Strengthen programs that resource community development roles at the neighbourhood level and strengthen the role of community centres in building local level capacity to plan for and respond to crisis events.

2. Sustain local government community development teams including a focus on proactive planning and governance arrangements that build long term local capacity.

3. Develop resource materials that can assist community building work during crisis responses and make these available through mechanisms such as the Community Door Website.

Build leadership and governance capacity

4. Adopt policies at all levels of government, to endorse and support the emergence of local area governance structures which are ongoing and which give capacity for planning, decision making, accessing resources and implementation of solutions. Local area governance arrangements should include all stakeholder groups and address any barriers to participation by disadvantaged groups. Where existing governance arrangements exist, they should be supported and enhanced as part of continued capacity building.

5. Develop and resource proactive leadership[2] programs at the neighbourhood level. These programs should identify existing and potential leaders, provide support and resources to assist people to effectively provide leadership capacity, energy and drive to the recovery process.

Develop effective local level plans that sit within wider planning processes

6. Incorporate disaster planning into all regional, community and local plans.

7. Develop a Community Building Recovery Plan involving federal, state and local governments, the community sector and residents. This plan will focus on consolidating and building on community capacity and community participation in recovery. These higher level plans can then be adapted to reflect specific local plans for future crisis situations.

8. Support communities through ongoing leadership and governance arrangements to develop local level recovery plans.

Support emerging, grass roots activities

9. Enhance and promote opportunities to access small grants for emerging community activities.

10. Offer free community space for community events (small and large scale).

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[2] See point 2.1.5 for more discussion on leadership as spanning formal and informal roles including grass roots leaders who act as animators and champions linking with a wider range of residents and stakeholders.

11. Where appropriate, plan and support celebrations, memorials and other rituals that encourage people, bring people together, provide opportunities to express gratitude and sustain momentum.

12. Adopt a flexible approach to existing funded programs and services to respond to local needs and issues emerging from the crisis.

13. Sustain contact database systems and coordination resources that support mutual helping within communities and help between areas as well. Tailor data base systems to identify specific skills sets such as counselling, builders etc. that can be deployed to specific communities. Where possible, link local people within their locality.

14. Provide support for social networking projects that explore the potential of social networking during and after an immediate crisis to assist recovery and community building work.

Addressing disadvantage

15. Develop a specific policy to identify community/area level vulnerability to crises and disasters and plan accordingly. This could include vulnerability mapping in all communities as a proactive measure.

16. Proactively address spatial disadvantage so that if disasters occur, more resources and capacity are available to assist recovery.

17. Ensure that vulnerable communities recover at least as quickly as other areas and develop mechanisms to measure and assess recovery progress against benchmarks.

18. Develop specific policy and program responses that identify vulnerable individuals and households in all affected communities and provide substantial support to manage their individual recovery process.

19. Where possible, assist people displaced by the floods to find alternative accommodation within the community of their choice or the community where they have longer term connections as an ongoing way of supporting recovery, wellness and belonging.

20. Continue outreach and door knocking to identify ongoing and emerging needs as well as households that are vulnerable. Linking roles are needed to assertively connect those households with the help that they need.

1.   Introduction

1.1   A focus on community development in recovery

Queensland's recent flood crisis and resulting widespread devastation have been featured in innumerable media accounts. Images of devastated individuals and families surveying the remains of their homes are embedded in collective memory. As the tragedy unfolded, new images began to emerge….people setting out from their houses and neighbourhoods, converging on designated registration points to be dispatched anywhere and everywhere help was needed. Queues of people waited patiently to lend their arms and legs, their hands and hearts to relieve the suffering of others, and by doing so, create an important milestone in our history. We go forward with a new appreciation of the depth of our capacity to care about each other.

This report focuses on those strategies that will best consolidate and strengthen relationships within and between communities, and harness the capacity created for continued effective engagement with government. A recovery effort that restores infrastructure and rebuilds homes, but also results in stronger, more resilient and caring communities will have long term implications for mental health, community capacity, productivity and hope.

1.2   About Under 1 Roof

Under 1 Roof (U1R) is a consortium of homelessness, housing and community agencies based in Brisbane's inner city offering a range of services citywide. Initially convened by the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley, these agencies have been working together since 2006 to build a strong, community-focused consortium supported by local businesses to end homelessness in Brisbane. While each participating agency is an entity in its own right, U1R represents a commitment by each participant to working together more closely and harnessing synergy as a resource, thus achieving better outcomes for homeless people. Currently U1R is working to contribute to the new Federal and Queensland Government approaches aimed at preventing homelessness, finding homes for people who are experiencing homelessness, and supporting people to remain housed.

The purpose of U1R is to work as one united and coordinated service system towards ending homelessness in Brisbane. Specific aims include:
□   The provision of comprehensive support for households to maintain their tenancies and participate fully in the community
□   To connect homeless people to services and housing choices that best meet their needs
□   To contribute to the supply of social and affordable housing dwellings to the meet the needs of individuals and families
□   To involve the whole community in ending homelessness.

U1R has developed a number of mechanisms aimed at service integration including the following:
□   A regular managers' forum where integration strategies are progressed
□   Regular case coordination meetings involving front line support staff and housing providers in advancing integrated housing and support outcomes for homeless people

☐ A workforce development strategy including the Synthesis Series and a combined training calendar aimed at building the capacity of front line staff and managers to apply leading practice in service delivery

☐ A project working towards the co-location of services which respond to homelessness in the Fortitude Valley area.

U1R embraces *housing first* principles and strives for persistent case management including active outreach and support models. U1R is a multi-agency response based on evidence supporting the importance of service integration that addresses the risk that homeless people must endlessly attempt to secure the help they need from a complex service system which routinely fails to fully integrate services. U1R works to reduce the risk that people will fall through service system gaps into chronic homelessness. It continually evolves practices, policies and procedures geared to achieve sustainable solutions to homelessness where people not only have quality housing and adequate support, but develop strong community connections.

1.3 Under 1 Roof and community development

U1R began under the leadership of the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley working to facilitate the involvement of community agencies, residents and businesses in ending homelessness. U1R also includes a number of agencies with expertise in community development and with programs focused on strengthening locality based relationships as a basis for working together on a range of community needs and issues.

At one level, this focus on community development aims to build mutual social relationships between people resulting in resilience and wellbeing. At other levels, community development work has helped to build structures and mechanisms where residents, businesses, community and government agencies come together to identify and address serious local issues.

U1R through the individual and collective efforts of all participating agencies is focused on ending homelessness. There is recognition that once housing and support are in place, that community development responses can help to consolidate a person's housing situation because there are opportunities to meet neighbours, build mutually supportive relationships (outside of the service system), become involved in local activities and civic engagement, all of which help facilitate a shift from just being housed, to living in a place of belonging.

1.4 The interactive forum to identify community development approaches to recovery

When the flood crisis emerged in a number of communities connected to U1R, there was recognition that this community development model was potentially an important part of recovery. While participating agencies quickly joined immediate relief efforts, there emerged recognition that ongoing recovery would be strengthened and hastened by continuing to harness community based relationships in identifying needs and implementing solutions. Given the incredible strength of the wider community's response, it was decided to hold an interactive forum to consider a range of strategies to guide a community development approach to recovery.

U1R issued an open invitation to leaders, community and government sector representatives to attend a focused, interactive forum to explore community development strategies in response to disaster recovery. The forum was attended by 63 people from a range of agencies and locations across Brisbane and beyond. The session went for 1.5 hours and the majority of the time was spent in interactive workshop groups addressing questions which are outlined below. The decision to hold a forum over a shorter time-frame was based on recognition of the many demands on people's time and also that more focused participatory methods with a clear purpose can help to refine thinking.

The agenda of this forum included the following:

☐ An introductory film by Feral Arts
☐ Brief presentations on community development ideas for going forward from four practitioners
☐ A workshop involving nine groups which addressed the following questions:
  ▪ What strategies, projects and activities will help to build on the community spirit and volunteering that has already been demonstrated?
  ▪ What strategies, projects and activities will help restore and strengthen the social fabric and create an even stronger foundation for future challenges and crises?
  ▪ What community building ideas will help people with residual trauma, fears for the future and grief for what has been lost?
  ▪ What strategies, projects and activities would strengthen the community's ongoing capacity to show leadership, plan and engage with government, business and other stakeholders about solutions to problems created by the floods?
  ▪ What different roles and responsibilities emerge from these ideas?

☐ Reported back on two or three key ideas and next steps were agreed.

The information collected during the forum is presented in section 3 of this report.

2.   A review of community development in disaster recovery: learning from other people and places.

The recent flood crisis has inevitably drawn comparisons with the 1974 flood, in terms of scale and impact. No two situations are perfectly similar and places inevitably differ in terms of culture, political systems, resource levels and history. Nonetheless, a significant body of literature exists exploring the role of community development and social capital in disaster recovery.   This section[3] provides some examples and insights from other jurisdictions in Australia and overseas and is included as a basis for thoughtful discussion about which ideas might best suit our context.   Community building methods often acknowledge both the essential role of local, 'insider' perspectives while simultaneously respecting outsider perspectives as a source of ideas and possibilities (Wenger et al, 2002).

2.1   A conceptual framework

2.1.1 Community

The recent floods have highlighted the plight of particular suburbs and towns. People and places may have experienced a new sense of identity based on a shared experience, significant in its intensity and impact. Community can be defined[4] by geography, interest, culture or a group that we belong to. Community as a geographical place where people live together is relevant to this current discussion about community development and disaster recovery. In an exploration of disaster readiness, Norris et al (2007:128) discuss the meaning of community to be

> "*not always but typically, ….an entity that has geographic boundaries and shared fate. Communities are composed of built, natural, social and economic environments that influence one another in complex ways*" .

Harnessing the power of people throughout a region is obviously very important when the scale of a recovery process is as significant as recent events in Queensland. This capacity will always be needed. Community development strategies however, will work to achieved more textured responses that include a capacity to continue linking local people with local people so that a sense of belonging to a particular place is strengthened. Some of the ideas presented in this report also highlight opportunities for one locality to reach out to another. To structure helping efforts in this way also enables people to build their sense of locality and place while hard hit communities also benefit from outside resources.

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[3] In 2010, the International Association of Community Development together with Community Development Services hosted a conference in New Orleans which included material on the role of community development in disaster recovery. At the time this paper was written, the proceedings were yet to be available. A special edition of Community Development Services' Journal is also pending. For more information go to http://www.comm-dev.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67&Itemid=78 .

[4] Geographical communities are emphasised in this discussion because it is geographical places that have been impacted. It is acknowledged that within different geographical communities there are many communities of interest, groups and cultures. This discussion focuses on how all of these groups share a sense of place identity that is a source of unity while also representing a rich fabric of diversity with much to offer the recovery process.

2.1.2 Community development

Definitions

To explore the role of community development in disaster recovery, it is perhaps important to begin with some understanding of community development and its impacts. The following definition is offered by the Community Development Alliance in Scotland highlighting both methods and outcomes:

> *"Community development is a process, a way of doing things. It can:*
> □ *bring people together*
> □ *help people to identify the problems and needs which they share and respond to these*
> □ *help people to discover the resources that they already have*
> □ *promote knowledge, skills, confidence and the capacity to act together*
> □ *strengthen organisation and leadership within communities*
> □ *strengthen contacts between communities.*
>
> *Once people are working together it can help them to:*
> □ *take action to address inequalities in power and participation*
> □ *deal directly with issues they think are important*
> □ *change the relationships between communities and public or private organisations*
> □ *help public organisations to work in more open and inclusive ways*
> □ *promote increased local democracy, participation and involvement in public affairs."*
>
> Community Development Alliance of Scotland, 2008:3

This definition sheds light on how bringing people together, and working with knowledge, resources and other strengths, helps to achieve the capacity to address local issues and to engage with government and business in strategies that make a positive difference. Many images and experiences emerging from the immediate crisis of the floods in Queensland demonstrated people coming together, identifying local needs and issues, and reaching out to harness resources (including people) that could help. An example in West End Brisbane was the combined efforts of the Ward Office and local community centre to identify specific needs of flood affected households and businesses, and engage with incoming volunteers to deploy help where and how it was needed. This response is continuing to evolve with a local steering group emerging that is working to develop a recovery plan.

Community development outcomes have also been applied in the context of disaster management with an example set out below from Emergency Management Australia (EMA):

Table 1:   Community development outcomes and the recovery process

Suggested key outcomes which help to measure the effective implementation of community development in recovery processes	
Informed community	Provision of information
Access to services and facilities	Communities have access to services, facilities and resources
Sense of community safety	People feel safe in their daily lives
Healthy community	Primary health, preventative health and environment practices
Participation in community life	Cooperative partnerships flourish
Sense of belonging	Pride, care and involvement in the community
Community cohesion	A capacity to work together with respect for differences
Community identity	Tradition and history
Economic recovery	Development of a community's economic capacity.

EMA, 2003:4

Distinguishing between community development and service delivery

It is important to differentiate service delivery from community development. While community organisations and community based entities are often also service providers, community development methods importantly bring particular approaches to engaging and involving the community itself in solutions. The provision of services is still obviously very important in the context of disaster recovery. Community development methods can make a difference to the extent that local people are able to identify and communicate with the services they need, and to shape the way that help is given. Local residents including official and unofficial leaders may then play a significant role in engaging with wider networks including government and business, to secure resources that are needed and influence the way in which those services are delivered. Community development reaches beyond something being done for people by others in a professional role, to people working together to make plans, secure resources and guide implementation.

Even approaches to service delivery can integrate community development methods as a way of engaging communities in their own recovery. In various communities during the recent floods, local people were involved in door knocking disaster affected areas to identify the needs of households and provide information about services and resources available. Follow up was then provided by local community organisations to provide specialist support. Some possible benefits of this approach include:

- local people meet local people and these relationships may continue to evolve (informally through meeting at gathering points, shops etc, or because people maintain social contact)
- local people learn directly about the issues for their community and this knowledge builds understanding and a capacity to respond in the future
- local people providing outreach capacity, learn skills about doing outreach work and may be interested in continuing to be active in their area
- the capacity of local services is extended beyond the availability of professional, paid staff
- local services are in touch with more local people who may continue their involvement as residents, leaders, neighbours, volunteers, in governance roles etc.

2.1.3 Social capital

Notions of social capital have emerged as a way of understanding the nature and impacts of relationships between people and organisations in localities. Applied to research on disaster recovery, the nature of social capital can assist in identifying how it serves as a resource, how it might be facilitated and also what considerations there are when working with communities where reserves of social capital are low relative to other places.

Hawkins and Maurer (2009:1780-1787) in a study in New Orleans gave examples of how the different categories of social capital were evident:

Table 2:   Categories of Social Capital

Category of social capital	Description	Examples from the study and Queensland
Bonding	"Relationships amongst members of a network who are similar in some form".	- Helping or giving help within immediate networks. - Families meet to define how they will manage the crisis. - This relationship influenced people's opportunities to leave New Orleans and stay somewhere else that was safe.
Bridging	"Relationships amongst members of a network who are dissimilar in a demonstrable fashion such as age, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity and education".	- Exchanging information, resources, supplies and food. - Socio-economic differences 'blurred' and did not seem as important. - People used their education to ask questions and get information and they shared that information with others.
Linking	"The extent to which individuals build relationships with institutions and individuals who have relative power over them".	- An existing civic improvement association expanded to generate linking social capital. - Creating a recovery committee or action group with participation from residents, formal and informal leaders, government and business.

Hawker and Maurer (2009) highlight that more homogeneous communities tend to demonstrate bonding social capital and that a lack of bridging capital contributes overall to the magnitude of a disaster and manifests in a general lack of preparedness. They contend that "the challenge of building heterophilous bridging and linking social capital is amplified when the homophilous community is economically and racially segregated" as was the case in New Orleans for example (2009:1781). It seems needless to say that communities that are disadvantaged may be at a greater risk of a slower recovery (Hawker and Maurer, 2009).

2.1.4 Resilience

Norris et al (2007) present a framework for community resilience in the context of disaster readiness and recovery. Highlighted are four types of adaptive capacities:

Table 3: Networked adaptive capacities as components of community resilience

Capacities	Examples
Information and communication	Responsible media Skills and infrastructure Trusted sources of information Narratives
Community competence	Community action Critical reflection and problem solving capacity Flexibility and creativity Collective efficacy Empowerment Political partnerships
Social capital	Received (enacted) social support Perceived (expected) social support Social embeddedness (informal ties) Organisational linkages and cooperation Citizen participation Leadership and roles (formal ties)
Economic development	Fairness of risks and vulnerability to hazards Level of diversity of economic resources Equity of resource distribution

Norris et al, 2007:136

This framework is explained as a set of 'networked adaptive capacities' with interacting and reinforcing elements.

They summarise the critical components in building what they term collective resilience as follows:

"*To build collective resilience, communities must reduce risk and resource inequities, engage local people in mitigation, create organisational linkages, boost and protect social supports, and plan for not having a plan, which requires*

flexibility, decision making skills, and trusted sources of information that function in the face of unknowns".

<div align="right">Norris et al, 2007:127</div>

Resilience is presented as encompassing the prevention of ill-health (including mental illness) in the wake of disasters and also those 'organisational behaviours' and disaster management practices that enable recovery. They propose that both these dimensions of resilience ensure safety and wellbeing (Norris et al, 2007:128). Norris *et al* offer many example definitions of resilience with some more than others highlighting the community's own role in recovery:

"A community's capacities, skills and knowledge that allow it to participate fully in recovery from disasters".

<div align="right">Coles, 2004 in Norris et al, 2007:129</div>

"The ability of community members to take meaningful, deliberate, collective action to remedy the impact of a problem, including the ability to interpret the environment, intervene and move on".

<div align="right">Pfefferbaum, 2005 in Norris et al, 2007:129</div>

2.1.5 Localities and people: participation, leadership and belonging

In community development methods of working, the focus is on how people come together around common concerns and interests. The emphasis on participation highlights themes of mutuality and roles where there is an exchange of resources, capacities and opportunities. In this sense, participation is an important concept and may come into play at every level of social capital (bonding, bridging and linking).

A great deal of public comment and discussion focused on volunteering before, during and after the floods and volunteering is an important resource base in any community. The Queensland Government has also set a target for increasing the level of volunteering overall and obviously the outpouring of concern which translated into such widespread volunteering is a foundation for further work to harness this resource. This report highlights volunteering as one aspect of participation while some people may see themselves as neighbours, friends, residents, community leaders and constituents as they participate in their locality.

Participation through a range of different roles is part of community building and the opportunities should exist for local people to become involved locally in many different ways. Community development also concerns itself with nurturing leaders at the local level. This notion of leadership goes beyond formal leaders or people elected to public office. Community development sees leadership as operating at every level of a community and residents themselves taking up a wide range of roles to reach out to others, connect people with each other and help drive positive changes for the future. Community development works with people who have emerged as leaders and also works to facilitate more people taking up leadership roles. Some examples might include:

☐ Working with homeless people and providing assistance to them to reach out to their peers with information and linkages to services (peer leadership)

☐ Develop a community recovery committee and identifying a range of residents and other stakeholders to participate. This may include formal leaders (the school principal and elected members for example) but will also include residents who are supported to link the committee's work with a wider base of residents.

□ Finding and supporting a champion or animator in every street to generate opportunities such as street parties, links with opportunities to have input to government on very local issues, sharing information about local activities and services, and building links between neighbours.

□ A group of residents trained to do local research about their neighbourhood, interviewing residents about issues and opportunities for the future and using this research to build wider understanding about the needs of that community (to other residents, businesses and government).

2.2   Activities that contribute to building community

Many examples of activities exist, highlighting the breadth and depth of imagination and commitment at the local level during times of crisis recovery. The following examples illustrate the scope for facilitating and enabling activities that reflect the unique strengths of people, the infrastructure, culture and history of places. At a really basic level, these responses bring people together and create opportunities for mutual exchanges of help, care and comfort. They nearly always reflect the available skills, interests and resources of a community and are most often spontaneous, although enabling facilitation also helps in allowing them to flourish:

□ Collecting and displaying artefacts on the impacts and also on the strength of community in response

□ Photography projects that will also help to identify iconic images which can continue to help define a collective self image/concept

□ Music, singing, writing poetry

□ History projects (visual, written, oral)

□ Blokes nights out – supporting friendship groups involving men impacted by the crisis

□ Outings that provide respite

□ Community get togethers (BBQs, shared meals etc)

□ Singed Sisterhood (an alliance between women from different disaster affected communities)

□ Art/activity based programs for children that are fun, and also mindful of children's needs during disaster recovery

□ Meditation, self care, well-being nights

□ Rebuilding Expo – bringing local people face to face with professionals and the building industry for advice.

□ Guest speakers

□ 'Thanks Mate' Day – a festival to thank helpers

□ Local papers offering to publish thank you messages[5]

□ Other public ways to thank helpers and reunite households with the people that helped them

□ Coffee and Chat (regular, space for talking)

□ Listening posts

□ Community radio features and programs

□ Storytelling projects

□ Song writing (together)

□ Community choirs

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[5] The Courier Mail published many thank you messages from people affected by the flood to the volunteers who helped, in the Weekend Edition 5-6 February 2011. These were arranged by locality.

- ☐ Existing activities may lend themselves to a focus on recovery issues, mutual support and linking people and businesses affected with wider networks
- ☐ Volunteer programs that create opportunities for local people to help local people if possible
- ☐ Volunteer programs that engage people from different socio-economic groups within a geographic locality
- ☐ Good neighbour days
- ☐ Street parties
- ☐ Memorials, anniversaries and milestone events
- ☐ Keeping a pattern of usual events going when it is possible, that people can depend on, and that can signal some things are the same even when many things have changed.

Richards *et al*, 2010; Local Government Association of Queensland, 2011; St Wise, 2011.

These types of activities may benefit from resources such as:
- ☐ Access to small grants[6]
- ☐ Free community space
- ☐ Free community advertising (notice boards, church newsletters, community newspaper, websites, social networking, email lists)
- ☐ A community development worker might play the role of supporting community leaders to develop activities, and may also actively facilitate the emergence of this type of community effort
- ☐ A community development worker may have the contacts and networks that help a resident with an idea for an activity, bring it to fruition
- ☐ Help with media contacts and engagement with the media either to promote the event or amplify its success as part of spreading good news recovery stories.

2.2   Strategies

The term 'strategy' is used here to encompass wider processes aimed at embedding effective responses at all levels of government and in all spheres including the community and local economy. They include multiple parts, involve many levels of stakeholders and generally advance responses that span the different dimensions of social capital. They may include specific activities emerging from the grass roots but they acknowledge the wider social, political, economic and environmental context. They are multi-dimensional and more complex.

In some locations where vulnerability to natural disasters is high, approaches to 'community-based disaster management' are well developed. In Taiwan for example, community based responses manifest in some of the following ways:

- ☐ Citizens volunteering as a way of extending the capacity of specific roles such as fire fighting
- ☐ Residents actively forming groups to assist their neighbourhoods immediately after a major disaster often underpinned by widespread participation in a range of community

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[6] These types of grants are responsive, enabling community activities that bring people together. They offer capacity to activities that people decide. The process should be simple and decision making rapid.

activities that have resulted in relationships being formed and contributing to 'interdependence after disaster events'

☐ Community based disaster management programs which included:
- Opportunities for communities to assess their vulnerability
- Identifying problems and developing solutions by involving the public sector, experts and residents
- Pre-disaster planning
- Facilitating 'disaster resistance capability' and disaster response training
- Supporting communities to move towards more resilience and sustainability into the future.

Chen et al, 2006:210-212

Chen et al (2006:214-215) describe the importance of participation as follows:

*"By the participatory process, participants would learn how to analyse vulnerable conditions, find ways to solve problems, develop strategies for risk reduction and establish an organisation to implement disaster management tasks"…….*The process was divided into six steps:

1. Orientation – with the goal of involving the public in the project
2. Collecting disaster experiences – to reveal the history of disasters, personal stories, information and issues that need to be addressed
3. Assessing vulnerabilities – identifying risk areas, exploring problems and putting these areas on a map
4. Evaluating problems and developing solutions
5. Establishing a community based disaster management organisation – a new organisation or a combination of existing groups. The important component was to have a well defined organisational structure.
6. Final presentation – a process of sharing the results in the community and beyond.

It was pointed out that this approach had other benefits, increasing problem solving capacity at a community level, making improvements to the local community, increasing capacity to respond to wider growth issues, preserve history and culture, and improve business and economic opportunities (Chen, 2006:222).

There is a relationship between opportunities for participation and engagement by affected communities and the prevention of further trauma. Participation can mitigate feelings of helplessness and strengthen relationships across different stakeholder groups including government and business which also creates opportunities to link to resources and wider capacity. Isolation for individuals within communities poses definite risks. Opportunities to be directly connected to wider recovery efforts through committees, local recovery plans and widespread communication methods are all important in overall rebuilding as well as the wellbeing, mental health and levels of hope experienced by individuals and places.

A case study from Kobe highlights where the value of deliberate strategies focussed on the role of civil society in recovery where the following was viewed as important:
☐ An increase in voluntary and non-government activities

☐ Enhancing cooperation between local government and residents' associations

☐ People's participation in the decision making process

☐ A role for residents' association in delivering programs and responses

☐ Economic incentives

☐ Leadership and collective decision making.

<div align="right">Shaw and Goda, 2004:16</div>

Other authors highlight that immediate help is often only available from other local people and this capacity needs to be strengthened. Jalali cites examples of earthquakes where community residents and locally based organisations play a key role, particularly in the immediate aftermath (2002:122). In Mexico City for example, community involvement was critical in the immediate crisis and also in later stages of recovery (Jalali, 2002:123). Community based organisations were able to contribute because:

> "*the were deeply rooted in the society and culture of each area, they enabled people to express their real needs and priorities, allowing problems to be correctly defined and responsive mitigation measures to be designed. Following disaster, people were able through community based organisations to articulate strategies for recovery and reconstruction which responded to their real needs*".

<div align="right">Maskrey in Jalali, 2002:123</div>

Other researchers highlight that the relationship between government and civil society in disaster recovery is one of synergy stating that 'active government and mobilised communities can enhance each other's development efforts' (Jalali, 2002:124). Evans quoted by Jalali makes this point:

> "*Creative action by government organisations can foster social capital and linking mobilised citizens to public agencies can enhance the efficacy of government. The combination of strong public institutions and organised communities is a powerful tool for development.*"

<div align="right">Evans in Jalali, 2002:124</div>

Examples of building structural capacity in response to disasters are evident in Australia. In three bushfire affected areas of Latrobe City for examples, "Community Recovery Committees (CRC) were established and are supported" (Richards et al, 2011:2). The role of the CRC included:

☐ Establish a Recovery Action Plan (with four key themes: economic, environment, rebuilding and people (personal and community recovery),

☐ Prioritise and action items

☐ Monitor progress, gather information and provide feedback

☐ Identify needs and resource requirements

☐ Liaise, consult, negotiate and lobby the various levels of government

☐ Being a sub-committee of the township or district association where they exist and elect office bearers for key positions

☐ To seek broad community neighbourhood membership fro local areas impacts and ensure appropriate representation.

<div align="right">Richards et al, 2011:2</div>

The work of the CRC in relation to the theme of people and community enabled the following types of activities:

> ## Box 1: Supporting people & communities through Recovery Action Plans in Latrobe City
>
> *"Maintaining community cohesion through community events, activities and the arts.*
>
> *Reconnecting with those who had been displaced.*
>
> *Communication about what is happening and what is available in a changing environment*
>
> *Safety in future events*
>
> *Providing for people's basic needs – material, physically and emotional*
>
> *Access to resources such as tools and equipment*
>
> *Access to information and services*
>
> *Community memorials and recognition*
>
> *Supporting volunteers and keeping people involved*
>
> *Ensuring the needs of all people are met, all ages and stages."*

Richards et al, 2011:4

Many other case studies from Australia are documented by Emergency Management Australia highlighting a range of strategic responses including planning forums, coordination mechanisms, community activities, community needs assessments and communication strategies (2003). EMA also provide checklists and indicators to assess impacts as a way of gauging the level of need for community development strategies.

EMA includes some important components of a community development work plan including:
□ Assessment of community needs and community capacity
□ Ensuring stakeholders get information throughout the process which expands knowledge and skills
□ Coordination and provision of services to affected residents in ways that are fair and equitable
□ Identifying the most vulnerable groups within the communities and develop strategies that meet their needs
□ Celebrate successes and recognise achievements
□ Gather data and learn lessons that help make communities more resilient for the future.

EMA, 2003:35-37

Responding to vulnerability

A wider strategic approach to disaster management allows for specific attention to particular issues such as responses that address disadvantage and acknowledge the vulnerability of some groups. Households and localities with limited material and economic resources may be particularly vulnerable during a crisis because:

□ Housing may be of a poorer standard and therefore more susceptible to damage

☐ Entire communities may include higher concentrations of disadvantaged residents with severe impacts on recovery.

<div align="right">Morrow, 1999:1-3</div>

Bolin and Stanford (1998) make the point that unmet needs after disasters are usually in part, a function of existing social inequalities that contribute to the creation of vulnerable populations. There is evidence of spatial inequalities in Queensland that provide a beginning capacity to assess where vulnerable geographical communities are (UnitingCare Queensland, 2010; Baum 2008). UnitingCare Queensland's Scan of Disadvantage highlights that even in areas defined a relatively less disadvantaged, there may also still be pockets of enduring spatial disadvantage, needing a response.

Morrow highlights that:

> "Poor households have insufficient financial reserves for purchasing supplies in anticipation of an event and for buying services and materials in the aftermath. The impact is likely to affect them disproportionately, including higher mortality rates as well as greater housing damage. Their economic and material losses, while less in absolute terms, can be devastating. Typically poor households recover more slowly and may never fully regain pre-impact levels, increasing their vulnerability to future hazards".

<div align="right">Morrow, 1999:3</div>

Morrow recommends developing vulnerability maps that contribute to the capacity to respond as quickly as possible to those communities. A community vulnerability inventory would show where at-risk groups are and might identify the following:

Box 2: Populations to consider in a community vulnerability inventory	
Residents in group living facilities	Cultural minorities (by language)
Frail elderly people	Recent residents/immigrants/migrants
Physically or mental disabled people	Large households
Renters	Large concentrations of children/young
Poor households	people
Women-headed households	The homeless
	Tourists and transient populations.

<div align="right">Morrow, 2006:10</div>

The resulting product could be a community vulnerability map which may serve as an invaluable tool for many stakeholder groups and planning processes. Morrow describes the next step as then attaching "initiatives, mitigation programs, evacuation plans, humanitarian relief distribution and other response services directly to local neighbourhood needs. These maps should also identify community resources, such as shelters, community centres, parks, local service groups and neighbourhood response networks" (Morrow, 2006:10).

Information sources in our current context might include boarding house registers, information supplied when tenants lodge their bonds[7] and maps indicating known areas where homeless people gather at services, in public space or improvised dwellings. Community infrastructure maps may also show where nursing homes and other group living premises are located. Privacy, ethics and respect would be essential in guiding implementation and protocols could achieve the best use of existing database information such as that available through the Residential Tenancies Authority for example without any threat to privacy at all. At the very least, robust discussion about strategies to ensure vulnerable people are contacted and assisted are essential.

Strategy elements

The following elements could be considered within a wider strategy:

☐ The development of governance structures can help to establish good linking social capital in the community so that people can influence decisions and get access to resources that help. This may also involve the adaptation or refocussing of existing governance structures. It is ideal when community development work facilitates governance capacity at the local level in a proactive way so that structures inclusive of all stakeholders are well developed by the time a crisis is at hand.

☐ Various local stakeholders working together to develop and implement a community recovery plan. A community recovery plan might address:

  ▪ Needs and resources assessment
  ▪ Rebuilding infrastructure
  ▪ A housing and re-housing strategy including strategies that help people remain within or close to their existing connections
  ▪ Place-making activities
  ▪ Community building activities
  ▪ Health strategies
  ▪ Re-connecting essential services
  ▪ Leadership capacity
  ▪ Public participation including the engagement of local people helping local people, and the best deployment of volunteers from other communities willing to help
  ▪ Communication and information sharing
  ▪ Risk assessment
  ▪ Disadvantage and vulnerability
  ▪ Funding and resourcing
  ▪ Local business and enterprise recovery.

☐ Existing community plans could be updated to encompass disaster recovery strategies involving local people. Future community planning processes then also address what a community can do at times of crisis.

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[7] Of course privacy is paramount however bond lodgement information might be a basis for government communicating with tenants about their rights and where they can get help. Other grass roots approaches such as door knocking could ensure that specific information is available for tenants as well.

- □ National and state-wide disaster strategies provide a policy context to develop regional and local plans that harness local involvement and create the best context for community participation in recovery.
- □ Formal and informal leadership[8] strategies harness existing and potential capacity to drive recovery processes. Leaders are identified, linked together, commit to engaging their own networks and help provide a driving energy to maintain momentum. Leaders are drawn from the local community and strive to find ways to engage the community itself in the process of recovery. Leaders will also advocate for an area, raising issues, proposing solutions and ensuring that resources and assistance continue for as long as they are needed.

These types of activities benefit from the following roles, resources and support:

- □ Community development workers may already have undertaken needs assessments and understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of a community as a basis for participatory recovery planning.
- □ Grass roots community development agencies may also have identified vulnerable residents and have ways of being in contact with people to ensure opportunities for active outreach and contact.
- □ Flexibility in relation to existing funding sources and service delivery priorities can enable local agencies to support strategy development
- □ Community development roles within local authorities have a great understanding of neighbourhoods and have forged many connections. Local authorities have a key role to play in relation to infrastructure, planning and community building.   The deployment of these roles to disaster recovery activities can assist greatly.
- □ Providing practical support to leaders and governance groups including facilitation, meeting space, secretariat support and legitimization from government.
- □ Service provision that understands the importance of participatory approaches and works to facilitate local recovery and service delivery through the participation of local people
- □ Brokering roles are helpful in building wider connections and securing resources that are needed (between the community and government, between the community and business, between different community groups with skills, strengths and resources to exchange).

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[8] See section 2.1.5 for more discussion of leadership in the context of community development.

3.   Ideas, examples and solutions: a record of proceedings.

The following record of ideas, examples and solutions reflects the wide ranging material generated at the recent forum. In this section, key activities and strategies are summarized.

Image: Amy Trotman

Question 1: What strategies, projects and activities will help to build on the community spirit and volunteering that has already been demonstrated?

This discussion highlighted the importance of being able to harness volunteers and engage them where they are needed. Opportunities to proactively link community centres in different areas, in a reciprocal arrangement when a crisis occurs were considered as a way of deploying volunteers in a way that build local identity (in each of the participating areas) and as a way of drawing on the considerable networks attached to community centres.

The involvement of leaders and deliberate strategies linking Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies were viewed as a way of harnessing energy and also seeking advice about how to approach recovery in a culturally sensitive way. Concerns were expressed about the relative differences between higher and lower income areas and the impact of this on recovery. The particular needs of disadvantaged groups were also identified as requiring special consideration.

Finding ways to amplify good-news stories were seen as important with a need for events, activities, mainstream media and social networking. Practitioners encouraged an approach that allowed and enabled ideas to flow from the grass roots without too much interference. There was recognition that volunteering will be needed in all phases of recovery including the immediate crisis, the recovery phase and ongoing. Community development work can help to sustain the opportunities for volunteering across these time frames.

Box 3 includes examples of specific strategies, projects and activities documented during the workshop.

Box 3: Strategies, projects and activities that will help to build on community spirit and volunteering

☐ Tap into contacts and data that each agency already has (potential source of skills, resources and donations)

☐ Specific funding opportunities to support activities

☐ Finding ways to enable people who want to help – some volunteers really wanted to help but were turned away

☐ Use the resources of generation Y

☐ Create brother/sister relationships between neighbourhood and community centres that can assist if there is a crisis

☐ Facilitate events that raise awareness of vulnerable groups and their needs (this can represent an ongoing crisis and recovery might be slower for these groups)

☐ Build on existing social capital

☐ Conduct research into lower and higher income areas to identify recovery issues and to compare issues and needs. Research social capital in both types of areas.

☐ Some urban communities are relatively well resourced while other areas have experienced much greater impacts such as the Lockyer Valley – what does this mean for disaster recovery. 57 or 73 local government areas are affected

☐ Make visible the good news stories and make visible what is needed

☐ Forge partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agencies as a way of understanding what is needed.

☐ Use social media

☐ Harness leaders and involve them in outreach

☐ Harness informal opportunities (such as people jogging and walking, changing route to affected streets to chat to people they meet)

☐ Address accommodation/housing needs. People will face questions about selling/moving. Will buy-back schemes be available?

☐ Harness and build on established networks

☐ Hold an annual event to remember and other celebrations

☐ Don't overly organise events and activities that emerge: let them flourish

☐ Organise local fund-raising (trivia nights etc)

☐ Acknowledge and work with the different phases of volunteering and participation needed: crisis, rebuilding, ongoing.

☐ Develop local community registers including for volunteers and what needs to be done

☐ Enable volunteering that is short term, long term, giving something, providing skills. Create as many accessible opportunities as possible including for people who don't have a lot of time

☐ Post flood thank you events

☐ Support people to connect themselves, don't over-regulate community work

☐ Provide resources to rebuild facilities, community spaces etc. where needed

☐ Use existing organisations at the local level as information distribution points

☐ Explore social media opportunities as a way of harnessing volunteers including generation Y

Some of the issues identified in this discussion included:

Question 2: What strategies, projects and activities will help restore and strengthen the social fabric and create an even stronger foundation for future challenges and crises?

This question highlighted the critical role of existing social capital which is enabled by existing neighbourhood and community agencies, non-profit agencies, service clubs, sporting clubs, recreation and social groups, and other community based activities. The role of social networking was also acknowledged as having the potential to contribute to a stronger foundation for facing future challenges.

Continued capacity and resourcing for events such as street parties were viewed as contributing to future capacity however caution was expressed in assuming that local networks exist. In some communities these networks are stronger and in others, they may require more support and enabling.

The flood crisis in some instances caused engagement between different groups for the first time. Sudanese community members for example were involved in supporting and helping. At the same time, some communities may have struggled more than others to articulate their needs and source help. Opportunities for continued engagement across and between different groups, communities of interest and sub-cultures are needed and are examples of bridging social capital.

One point was made that opportunities generally now exist to identify more locally than just as a Queenslander. With so many volunteers now registered on databases and presenting to local agencies, there is a need for sufficient resources for coordination and continued engagement. More broadly there was support for continued discussion and planning across agencies in relation to community building activities post-crisis.

One participating agency described how they proceeded with a pre-planned event for 26th January even though they were directly flood affected and their community had experienced widespread damage. It was seen as positive to focus on something other than the floods and to keep other traditions going. Sustaining other patterns of events, resuming other activities as quickly as possible and enabling people to gather as they usually do in groups, activities, hobbies and recreational pursuits within their neighbourhood will also contribute to restoring contact with social relationships. In providing mutual support, these relationships are a chance to tell stories and to listen, and provide opportunities to engage your social networks in helping the continued recovery of individuals and households.

Box 4 includes examples of specific strategies, projects and activities documented during the workshop.

Box 4: Strategies, projects and activities that help restore and strengthen the social fabric and build capacity for future crises.

- ☐ Using existing social capital - local neighbourhood/community agencies, non-profits, Lions Club
- ☐ Using social communication (Facebook, Twitter) as mobilising tools, as relationship building
- ☐ Promote and resource neighbourhood strategies, i.e. street parties
- ☐ Foster and support but don't take over.
- ☐ Empower local networks
- ☐ There is an assumption that local networks exist - they may not
- ☐ Sudanese community engaged in helping processes
- ☐ Expressing the need for or desire to help may have been hindered by language and other issues
- ☐ Some networks will whither - intentional communities versus communities that form through circumstances
- ☐ Training, learning and planning community groups established by flood response to go out and continue to help in the community. This may incur a cost for coordination.
- ☐ Training - drawing on donated skills to educate the community - set up programs, emergency response etc
- ☐ Afternoon storytelling, sharing, listen and respond to, addressing grief (sister suburb)
- ☐ Helping people restore memories and create artefacts that restore memories if belongings have been lost
- ☐ 26th January Ceremony and Gathering – it was good to go and do something that was not about the flood
- ☐ Opportunity to explore the community connection beyond 'Queenslander'

Some of the issues identified in this discussion included:

- ☐ The levels of resilience of communities is varied
- ☐ Different levels of trust affected the capacity of people to accept help. Processes that build trust at a local level are really important.
- ☐ Vulnerable groups gave and received help and the opportunity to participate is an important part of wellbeing
- ☐ We need ongoing opportunities for agencies to engage with each other across areas.

Question 3: What community building ideas will help people with residual trauma, fears for the future and grief for what has been lost?

There was significant concern and awareness of the long term implications of residual trauma and grief. While there was acknowledgement of the importance of counseling, participants highlighted the value of making these opportunities local – an example being counselors approaching local agencies in affected areas to offer regular free sessions to anyone who needs or wants help.

Image: Amy Trotman

Continued effectiveness in practical responses was highlighted with an obvious relationship between practical assistance to recover and people being able to return to their houses with some degree of normality which is a strong foundation for recovery. The advice from this gathering was to keep the recovery assistance going for as long it was needed. Continued displacement from your neighbourhood may cause significant trauma and stress and strategies are needed to identify where households have been displaced and how they can be helped to sustain connections to their local community.

Creating opportunities for celebrations, storytelling, listening points, ongoing social networking and reclaiming important days (Neighbour Day and Queensland Day) to mark achievements and as an opportunity to say thank you were all suggested.

The need for specific responses to different groups was raised – different groups may have different needs. This required continued assessment and there was strong support for ongoing outreach and door-knocking especially to identify anyone who is isolated, vulnerable and needing assistance.

This question raised a lot of other broader community responses such as narrative processes, connections between sister suburbs, localising recovery assistance and community activities. Resources and capacity to generate these types of responses are essential.

Box 5: Community building ideas will help with residual trauma, fears for the future and grief for what has been lost.

☐ Providing avenues, places to tell stories

☐ Encourage people to talk with family and friends

☐ Have a range of therapies or approaches – including for children

☐ Communication access points – phones, internet

☐ Having localised responses using and building those resources rather than big evacuation centres

☐ Buddy calling system

☐ Collective narrative process - sister suburbs

☐ Nurture street parties and unit block parties and involve businesses and other stakeholders

☐ Some local centres have access to volunteer counsellors and psychologists that are offering time for free counselling. Develop a network of volunteer counsellors/facilitators and promote including through websites. Bring these opportunities into local communities.

☐ One-on-one counselling response is primary, however many people do not feel comfortable accessing a counsellor or support worker so, community events such as community debriefing event, and other cultural events or programs (circus, creative processes) can be the 'soft access' point to offer support to people and networks and where one-on-one support relationships can form and evolve.

☐ Develop a facilitators network to help small group processes

☐ Group therapy options

☐ Network landlords who need support with recovery activities

☐ Keep door-knocking to identify needs and reduce isolation. Reduce people's feeling of isolation – outreach, support via Lifeline. Door-knock again soon.

☐ Build action around climate change as a focus on the future

☐ Pro-active process/program of building leadership in areas

☐ Develop local stimulus package and local buy program for local businesses affected by floods to reduce economic impacts and associated stress

☐ Post traumatic stress is triggered in part by helplessness

☐ Continue to celebrate milestones

☐ Continue the level of outreach by local agencies to affected areas

☐ People deal differently with trauma – individual responses are needed, targeted to particular groups such as children, older people, people who are isolated, people living alone. We need to consider the particular needs of:
  ▪ different age groups and sub-populations
  ▪ workers and the unemployed
  ▪ families, groups and singles
  ▪ tenants and home owners
  ▪ children/young people/seniors
  ▪ CALD communities and households
  ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  ▪ Homeless people.

☐ Facilitate shared experiences such as memorials

☐ Use existing events where possible such as through historical societies, Bridge to Brisbane etc.

☐ Street parties – businesses to be involved (support/participate)

☐ Reduce barriers to activities– challenge apparent restrictions and regulations – for example Coles at New Farm cooked up a huge BBQ with meat in fridges that would have gone on to spoil during power outages. At any other time, WH&S considerations may have been seen as a barrier.

☐ Information flows are essential – not just mass media, but local and focussed

☐ Responses need to be conscious of the changing nature of need over days, weeks, months – coming in with a 'plan' may not meet the actual need and/or perceived needs of that community at that time. Needs continued assessment.

☐ Many people feel that if they haven't lost everything or that they haven't lost as mush as their neighbour then they don't have the right to grieve, even though they are indeed grieving. Finding safe spaces for this grieving to occur is important.

☐ Importance of pets and animals to grief and loss – hold pet events!

☐ Responding to people who wanted to volunteer/offer but couldn't get through how do we respond to their desire and need to help?

☐ Identifying an upcoming day (or event) to claim and prepare for as a celebration event – maybe 'Qld Day' in June or something else?

☐ Thank you events – non-threatening engagement activities with trained counsellors/staff in attendance; Community celebrations, Use annual neighbour's day.

☐ Ongoing volunteers/recovery centre every day for as long as it takes – counsellors on site

☐ Supporting people across the city (not just affected areas), eg home owners that rent their flooded property but don't live in the area – they don't have neighbours to talk or relate to

☐ People who live in a street where other have moved out – need volunteers to check on people

☐ Need to offer support to families/friends of flood effected communities

☐ Need to direct ongoing volunteer opportunities for households – especially volunteers that helped in the first week and want to come back a month later.

Question 4: What strategies, projects and activities would strengthen the community's ongoing capacity to show leadership, plan and engage with government, business and other stakeholders about solutions to problems created by the floods?

This question raised many responses which support a rationale for strengthening leadership, planning capacity and decision making about solutions. This question relates more to linking social capital and governance capacity with a focus on how to create the types of inter-sectoral linkages that also involve residents, in making plans, making decisions and driving implementation.

Some affected communities engaged existing local governance groups while others quickly organised a recovery team to make plans and organise resources, volunteers and linkages with services, businesses and government. Some communities have decided to maintain these structures and develop a localised recovery plan translating the wider, higher level planning that is underway and driven by government, into localised solutions that respond to specific local needs for individuals, streets, precincts, businesses and local economies.

The recent crisis highlights the importance of linking social capital and that some communities have more existing resources like this, than others. There is an essential role for community development in helping to build and sustain these structures before, during and after crises. These structures support formal leadership to be effective and are essential to recovery capacity.

Box 6: What strategies strengthen the community's ongoing capacity to show leadership, plan and engage with government business and other stakeholders about solutions?

- ☐ Build local databases of contacts, donations and assistance.
- ☐ Social network online with individuals who have volunteered - provide storytelling and photos.
- ☐ Engaging with government and involving government at events
- ☐ Engaging with government on topics such as lobbying for insurance reform
- ☐ Extended planning for the future to include planning for disasters and crises
- ☐ A pattern of social events that bring people back together including volunteers
- ☐ Create a network of structures relevant to businesses and community organisations that work on a range of issues
- ☐ Develop capacity to lobby for affordable housing, ie - boarding houses that were destroyed
- ☐ Council be prepared to have interim solutions to deal with housing shortage - quick fix solutions are ok
- ☐ Future planning for disasters – for example, a community disaster plan for West End Community House and wider community
- ☐ Structures that assist with information dissemination are crucial
- ☐ Leadership shown by BCC and state government was excellent and we need to give feedback
- ☐ Raise awareness of need to address climate change - people action around climate change, resilience building around climate change, coping with drought
- ☐ Government and Council need to recognise that the capacity and energy of local community organisations was essential. Flexibility/responsiveness of community centres proved essential. Important to build on existing community hubs/services/facilities - to ensure they can play a key role in times of crisis and recovery.
- ☐ Recommendation to council and state government about the need to invest in local community organisations and BCC community development.
- ☐ Formal partnerships such as with Caxton Legal Service to partner with other organisations to help address the legal needs of victims - issues are emerging with body corporates, insurance, employment etc. May be a piece of work that suggests a body corporate ombudsman

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Box 6: What strategies strengthen the community's ongoing capacity to show leadership, plan and engage with government business and other stakeholders about solutions?

☐ Need ways of assessing needs of vulnerable people such as people with disabilities at times such as the loss of utilities

☐ How do we get support for our local businesses - local buying and local stimulus program

☐ How can communities foster local leadership if it isn't strong?

☐ Local infrastructure is very important - parks, bike paths, community centres

☐ Does BCC suburban centre improvement program still exist?

☐ Community advocacy regarding different needs

☐ Participatory planning processes (grass roots) - strengthen relationships between local people and other stakeholders

☐ Contact with and involvement through body corporates; also avenues for people to advocate about body corporate issues (ombudsman?)

☐ Don't forget really disadvantaged people - work out a way to involved them particularly in planning for the future

☐ Focus on activities that have strong outcomes - and use those as the vehicle for relationships, leadership processes to evolve - action focussed.

☐ Physical responses - coordinated/collaborative activities/relationships

☐ Flexible, local responses are needed that can support individuals that fall through cracks. Activities that empower them to take control, fix up homes, getting back into homes.

☐ Local coordination - so volunteers can link in and be effective and responsive

☐ Recovery centres could be made more holistic - include community services as well - for example tenancy advice

☐ People may need individual support – such as case manager - to coordinate referrals

☐ Caring for workers is really important

☐ Need to continue to strengthen relationships across business, residents etc.

☐ Make sure people are well educated so are better prepared for the future - important part of recovery

☐ Building/strengthening centres and hubs - to be a key link, coordinating agency

☐ Linking social capital in action - projects and activities with tangible outcomes - that empower people to meet their own recovery needs

☐ Preparedness into the future - education, preparedness plans

☐ Need structures and support to capitalise on residents' ideas and passion. For example, Rocklea residents wanting to restart Neighbourhood Watch, Oxley Bowls Club suggesting a rename to Oxley Community Centre, residents offering 'free internet in the garage'

☐ Build on governments network of appropriate response of builders/tradespeople

☐ Use story-telling to build on knowledge of the floods (such as flood markers)

Question 5: What different roles and responsibilities emerge from these ideas?

This question highlighted a range of functions including planning at all levels and strong links between higher level planning and specific, responsive and unique community plans. Community development roles were generally seen as valuable and needing support from Government.

Leadership (both formal and informal) was seen as essential to prevention, crisis responses and proactive planning after the immediate disaster.

Box 7: Roles and responsibilities

☐ Localised leadership, formal and informal is important: many 'leaders' emerge through these events

☐ Liaison roles between local and government

☐ Participation processes are important – to ensure everyone gets heard

☐ Have centralised, easily identifiable recovery centres and info lines

☐ Consultation and disaster planning roles

☐ Crisis events challenge people to stay with their traditional roles and responsibilities - and

☐ Community planning generally should include, as standard, crisis/disaster responses

☐ Community development roles are important in prevention, during crises and in the aftermath – important to communicate a CD response to upper levels of government for support and funds as a central and critical response in times of crisis. Support also is needed for flexible immediate solutions including through small grants

☐ How is upper-level government disaster preparedness strategy linked to the ground level? Transparency and genuine input and engagement from the community to inform this planning is important

☐ Explore 'future proofing', eg informing communities of potential for disasters affected by climate etc.

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4. Discussion

The range of ideas from the literature review and raised during this event highlight a significant role for community development in contributing to networks, resilience, leadership capacity and governance arrangements that improve local recovery efforts.

The significant immediate needs of households, entire neighbourhoods, towns and businesses highlight the critical role of government in comprehensive planning, ensuring services are provided and resources are available. The role of government infrastructure together with specific roles for a substantial workforce drawn from Brisbane City Council and the military for example, resulted in immediate capacity which in turn contributes to hope and wellbeing among those most affected.

Significant capacity for harnessing and deploying residents willing to help, was also made possible through agencies such as Volunteering Queensland and the Red Cross. This capacity was augmented with many local efforts to link residents with other residents in localities, as well as help in meaningfully deploying large contingents of people arriving in affected communities to offer assistance. Local door knocking and triage efforts meant that in some communities, volunteers were well directed to where local need existed. The strength of local communities identifying local needs from a bottom up perspective reaching out to government and larger institutions with large-scale capacity to harness and provide resources is a good example of why top-down and bottom up processes need not be seen as binary opposites.

The forum heard that significant help and assistance was exchanged by residents outside of any formal volunteering process. People helped each other prepare and helped each other recover. The strength of nearby social networks is a definite factor in people's capacity to prepare and recover. In disaster scenarios overseas, there is acknowledgement that if the disaster situation is so difficult, social networks and relationships nearby are the only source of help until disaster recovery assistance can physically reach affected communities. This strengthens the case for locality based community development which proactively builds and strengthens these relationships which come into play in disaster preparedness and recovery. This fabric of local relationships also enhances belonging and ensures people have access to many possible resources and opportunities such as exchanges of child care, local action groups, and community gatherings based on common interests.

Community development roles and functions quickly emerged from agencies such as neighbourhood and community centres which have traditionally used community development methods and employed specialist staff in designated community development work roles. Local governments also invest in and provide significant community development capacity in Brisbane City as one example and these roles have been instrumental in work that has built community capacity before the crisis, ensured a good understanding of community issues and enabled many locality based responses to emerge quickly during the immediate aftermath of the floods. The ideas generated in this workshop and expressed in the literature also highlight that community development methods are deployed by many types of agencies, stakeholders and individuals. These methods can also be integrated with traditional service delivery to expand outreach and build the capacity of professional helpers to reach more people as just one example.

Many participants in the forum expressed that the extent of participation was so great that not every offer of help was able to be taken up. From a community development perspective, finding capacity to continue to engage people, exchange thanks and gratitude, and continue to offer help in the longer term aspects of recovery are all important. Supportive infrastructure including databases, coordination roles and social networking are all needed to enable putting local people in touch with local people so that locality based reciprocal relationships are strengthened as much as possible. Unaffected communities are also seeking ways of helping with ideas such as sister suburbs, buddy systems etc. being flagged as a way of building capacity between neighbourhoods to exchange help when it is needed.

The scope and creativity of ideas to bring people together in supportive relationships which provide opportunities for mutual helping, celebrations and memorials, seem unlimited. Some basic resources can be helpful such as small, responsive grants programs, while offers of community space, facilitation help, advertising etc. are all potentially very useful. There was clear advice about the organic and creative nature of these responses. Community development can help, but overly orchestrating these types of activities wouldn't help. They need to flow from communities themselves and meet with responsive, respectful help that doesn't take over.

The fate of isolated and disadvantaged residents was raised consistently across the groups and is also highlighted in the literature about community development and recovery. Community development is fundamentally concerned with including everyone and uses particular methods to overcome barriers to the participation of groups with fewer resources and other structural barriers preventing access. Specific efforts are needed to ensure the wellbeing of disadvantaged residents including continued access to available material resources, help to be re-housed if possible and within the community of their choice so as to sustain longer term connections, and deliberate efforts to ensure that all community driven activities are inclusive and that barriers to participation are overcome. Overall, some communities are more relatively disadvantaged than others and careful assessment of the implications of relative disadvantage is needed. Specific strategies are needed to ensure that entire areas are not left behind in the recovery process.

Much of this type of capacity is underpinned by local governance, those structures that bring together all key stakeholders including residents, to plan for the future, identify issues, secure resources, allocate responsibilities and drive implementation. This capacity is usually at different stages of development in different communities. Existing structures can function this way (resident groups, community planning teams, local area advisory committees etc) or new structures can be created. In Brisbane recently, many communities quickly assembled leaders from all sectors to plan localised recovery efforts and ensure that engagement with government articulated local needs and coordinated resources, services and help to have the greatest positive impacts. Some communities are already extending the role of these groups to develop local recovery plans and the workshop highlighted that all community and regional planning should plan for how disaster recovery will be managed should the worst happen again.

Community development roles supporting these structures are very important and so are processes of legitimisation where these structures are endorsed by government (political and administrative arms) and the wider community. This process of legitimisation provides authority to these structures and supports them to raise their profile as a source of effective leadership in the community. As formalised governance arrangements, these

groups then also have responsibilities and must define processes of accountability to all stakeholders. Active support for developing and sustaining governance arrangements in local communities by government is important. While crisis responses are commendable, long term, strong and effective governance groups that are already engaged in the implementation of various solutions to community issues is the best foundation for stronger recovery where bottom-up efforts and top-down support come together to achieve effective and sustainable results.

Queensland's recent flood crisis resulted in thousands of Queenslanders helping each other to prepare and in the recovery process. This report highlights those strategies that will best consolidate and strengthen relationships within and between communities, and charness the capacity created for continued effective engagement between communities and government. A recovery effort that restores infrastructure and rebuilds homes, but also results in stronger, more resilient and caring communities will have long term implications for mental health, community capacity, productivity, resilience and hope.

5.   Recommendations

Strengthen community development capacity and resources

1. Strengthen programs that resource community development roles at the neighbourhood level and strengthen the role of community centres in building local level capacity to plan for and respond to crisis events.

2. Sustain local government community development teams including a focus on proactive planning and governance arrangements that build long term local capacity.

3. Develop resource materials that can assist community building work in crisis preparedness and recovery and make these available through mechanisms such as the Community Door Website

Build leadership and governance capacity

4. Adopt policies at all levels of government, to endorse and support the emergence of local area governance structures which are ongoing and which give capacity for planning, decision making, accessing resources and implementation of solutions. Local area governance arrangements should include all stakeholder groups and address any barriers to participation by disadvantaged groups.   Where existing governance arrangements exist, they should be supported and enhanced as part of continued capacity building.

5. Develop and resource proactive leadership[9] programs at the neighbourhood level. These programs should identify existing and potential leaders, provide support and resources to assist people to effectively provide leadership capacity, energy and drive to the recovery process.

Develop effective local level plans that sit within wider planning processes

6. Incorporate disaster planning into all regional, community and local plans.

7. Develop a Community Building Recovery Plan involving federal, state and local governments, the community sector and residents. This plan will focus on consolidating and building on community capacity and community participation in recovery. These higher level plans can then be adapted to reflect specific local plans for future crisis situations.

8. Support communities through ongoing leadership and governance arrangements to develop local level recovery plans.

Support emerging, grass roots activities

9. Enhance and promote opportunities to access small grants for emerging community activities.

10. Offer free community space for community events (small and large scale).

11. Where appropriate, plan and support celebrations, memorials and other rituals that encourage people, bring people together, provide opportunities to express gratitude and sustain momentum.

12. Adopt a flexible approach to existing funded programs and services to respond to local needs and issues emerging from the crisis.

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[9] See point 2.1.5 for more discussion on leadership as spanning formal and informal roles including grass roots leaders who act as animators and champions linking with a wider range of residents and stakeholders.

13. Sustain contact database systems and coordination resources that support mutual helping within communities and help between areas as well. Tailor data base systems to identify specific skills sets such as counselling, builders etc. that can be deployed to specific communities. Where possible, link local people within their locality.

14. Provide support for social networking projects that explore the potential of social networking during and after an immediate crisis to assist recovery and community building work.

Addressing disadvantage

15. Develop a specific policy to identify community/area level vulnerability to crises and disasters and plan accordingly. This could include vulnerability mapping in all communities as a proactive measure.

16. Proactively address spatial disadvantage so that if disasters occur, more resources and capacity are available to assist recovery.

17. Ensure that vulnerable communities recover at least as quickly as other areas and develop mechanisms to measure and assess recovery progress against benchmarks.

18. Develop specific policy and program responses that identify vulnerable individuals and households in all affected communities and provide substantial support to manage their individual recovery process.

19. Where possible, assist people displaced by the floods to find alternative accommodation within the community of their choice or the community where they have longer term connections as an ongoing way of supporting recovery, wellness and belonging.

20. Continue outreach and door knocking to identify ongoing and emerging needs as well as households that are vulnerable. Linking roles are needed to assertively connect those households with the help that they need.

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We apologise for any unintentional omissions. If your attendance wasn't recorded, please let us know and we will correct electronic versions of this report.